

The Montana Alliance for Drug Endangered Children

Who are Montana's Drug Endangered Children and What is Being Done to Assist Them? Drug endangered children (DEC) are those children who suffer physical or psychological harm or neglect resulting from exposure to illegal drugs, to persons under the influence of illegal drugs, or to dangerous environments where drugs are being manufactured or chemicals used to make drugs are accessible. These harms may include: injury from explosion, fire or exposure to toxic chemicals found at clandestine lab sites; physical abuse; sexual abuse; medical neglect and; lack of basic care including failure to provide meals, sanitary and safe living conditions, or schooling. Drug endangered children are part of a very large population of children whose lives have been seriously and negatively impacted by dangerous drugs.

Today, most drug endangered children are discovered or "rescued" during law enforcement actions involving their parents or caregivers. That event may be one of the most defining moments of their lives. If ignored and left unmonitored, these children continue to be victims caught in a cycle of drug abuse.

The Montana Alliance for Drug Endangered Children was founded on November 17, 2004 and incorporated as a nonprofit organization in the state of Montana on June 28, 2006. We are a multidisciplinary organization which advocates intervention on behalf of these children and urges communities to build collaborative, effective teams to provide coordinated services and support for these child victims. DEC teams include first responders, child protective services, law enforcement, medical and mental health professionals, prosecutors and county attorneys, child advocates, substance abuse treatment providers and other community leaders, as well as the general public. Upon removal from a dangerous environment, drug endangered children need the immediate attention of child welfare services and assessment by medical and mental health professionals. If parents have endangered children, their actions may necessitate prosecution, termination of parental rights, or court supervision of family reunification. The Montana Alliance for Drug Endangered Children seeks the long-term goal of providing safe, supportive and drug-free environments which permit children to prosper.

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